

Does God Care Why You're Righteous?
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Does motive matter? Does God care WHY you are righteous? Does He care if you are righteous because you want His blessings, or because you like being a part of a group, or because you are in the habit of being righteous, or because you like truth?

The Old Testament was given for our learning and is full of examples to learn from. So let's consider one. Jonah was sent to Nineveh to tell the people that their wickedness had come to God and that He would destroy them if they did not repent (**1:2, 3:4**). Notice the response of the people and the motive of the king:

Jonah 3:5, 8-9. *So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.... [The king said,] But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, **that we perish not?***

These people did not want to die! Their PRIMARY reason for repenting was self-preservation! NOT to love God with all their hearts and all their minds! NOT to seek His truth and obey Him because they liked Him! This was a purely selfish reason to do what God said! Just like being righteous because you get to be a part of a group or because you get God's blessings is selfish! And what did God do when He saw the people of Nineveh repent and obey His commandments, albeit for selfish reasons? Did He say, "Well, I'm still going to destroy you. You're only repenting because you don't want to die! You are being selfish and not repenting for the truth's sake"? No!

Jonah 3:10. *And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and **God repented of the evil**, that he had said that he would do unto them; and **he did it not.***

God honored their repentance and spared their lives EVEN THOUGH their motives were selfish. He did not care WHY they repented; He was just glad they did! And if you think this is an isolated event, consider that Israel did the SAME THING!

Psalm 78:34-38. *When he [God] slew them, **THEN they sought him**: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless **they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.** For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. **BUT he, being full of compassion, FORGAVE THEIR INIQUITY, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.***

Notice! When God slew the Israelites – when He killed some of them – THEN they sought Him and repented! They only wanted to live – just like the Ninevites wanted to live! NOT ONLY THAT! They were LYING to God about changing, and God KNEW IT! Nevertheless, God FORGAVE them and turned His anger away, only so they could again commit sin and flatter Him with their mouths. This happened REPEATEDLY throughout the Old Testament – showing that motives didn't matter – but what does the New Testament reveal?

Jesus performed many miracles, some of which included feeding thousands of people from very small

amounts of physical food available. And He said that those people followed Him NOT because of the other miracles or because they wanted to know the truth. He said they followed Him because they wanted to be fed!

John 6:26. *Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.*

Jesus told the people to either believe Him or believe the works.

John 10:38. *But if I do [the works of my Father], though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.*

It would seem that Jesus is saying that motives don't matter, but wait! They DO matter!

Mark 10:29-30. *And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, **for my sake, and the gospel's**, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.*

Jesus says that people who give up those things for HIS SAKE AND THE GOSPEL'S shall receive a hundredfold in this life and eternal life. NOT those who give them up for other reasons – like to be a part of a group or to receive some sort of blessing from God! So, motives DO matter!

Now it seems I have contradicted myself, but I haven't! God has instituted two covenants. The first covenant was given to a people who were wholly carnal and who loved to have it that way! The second covenant was given to a people who were spiritual and who wanted to know the truth of God.

Under the old covenant, God could only judge people by their works – not by the intentions of their hearts. Why? Before I answer that question, consider that the people DID NOT WANT God to be able to see their hearts or even to have access to their hearts. Instead, they wanted Moses to be a mediator.

Exodus 20:19, 21. *And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.... And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.*

So, why couldn't God judge the people by the intentions of their hearts? Because the people were uncircumcised in heart, God could not see their motives. The foreskin of their hearts was still present, hiding their thoughts and motives from God and from others. For those people living under this covenant, to be accepted, all they had to do was to do well. And they didn't have to do well for the right reasons to be accepted of God!

Genesis 4:7. *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? ...*

But, under the new covenant, God CAN see the thoughts and intents of the heart, for that is the very DEFINITION of the new covenant. The foreskin covering the heart is removed at baptism – at the signing of the New Covenant Contract. This is the covenant God wanted from the beginning!

Deuteronomy 10:16. *Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.*

One example of this in the New Testament is Simon Magus. He was a sorcerer of Samaria that appeared to many to have converted to the true faith as taught by Philip, Peter, and John. When the apostles laid hands on people and imparted to them the gift of the holy spirit, Simon tried to pay them for this power:

Acts 8:17-19. *Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.*

And Peter responded with:

Acts 8:20-23. *...Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: **for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.** Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. **For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.***

Peter said that Simon's motives DID matter! He said that Simon's heart was not right with God and that Simon was still in the bond of iniquity! There were still sins hidden in Simon's heart that he had not repented of, and Peter – through the holy spirit – could see his heart! AND it was BECAUSE his heart wasn't right that he had "*neither part nor lot in this matter*" – no part in the holy spirit – no part in the new covenant!

2 Corinthians 9:7. *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*

Purposing in your heart is more private than purposing with your lips. God can see whether you are giving cheerfully or not. With an uncircumcised heart, God can see all of your motives – be it giving with a spirit of cheerfulness or desiring something so you can consume it on your lusts.

James 4:3. *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

Every person begins his life under the old covenant. As he begins to do the law, he is justified in God's sight (**Romans 2:13-15**). Fearing the Lord by keeping His commandments is a good start, for doing just that, a person can have increased understanding in the law of God (**Psalms 111:10, Proverbs 1:7, Proverbs 9:10**). For people under the old covenant, motives do not matter. God is just happy they are obeying Him.

But, for baptized people – for those who choose to live under the new covenant – motives do matter. The more an individual knows God, the more that individual's motives matter – the more God expects of him.

Luke 12:48. *But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. **For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required:** and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*